

The Ryder Cup

Saturday, September 25, 2021

Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Steve Stricker

Press Conference



Saturday Afternoon Four-balls

JOHN DEVER: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the 43rd Ryder Cup here at Whistling Straits. We are with U.S. captain Steve Stricker.

Steve, we do not have the pairings quite yet. Do you mind giving those a quick read.

STEVE STRICKER: Sure. Are you going to write them down as I go?

JOHN DEVER: Yeah, story time.

STEVE STRICKER: Okay. Xander Schauffele versus Rory McIlroy.

Patrick Cantlay versus Shane Lowry.

Scottie Scheffler versus Jon Rahm.

Bryson DeChambeau versus Sergio García.

Collin Morikawa versus Viktor Hovland.

Dustin Johnson versus Paul Casey.

Brooks Koepka versus Bernd Wiesberger.

Tony Finau versus Ian Poulter.

Justin Thomas versus Tyrrell Hatton.

Harris English versus Lee Westwood.

Jordan Spieth versus Tommy Fleetwood.

And Daniel Berger versus Matt Fitzpatrick.

JOHN DEVER: Thank you, sir, for educating us. Let's go with your overarching thoughts as you look at that list in front of you. Your excitement level for tomorrow and what you think about what you laid out for your team.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I mean, obviously I love the way the guys are playing, and the energy that they are bringing on a regular, daily basis, and you know, we have said it from the start how loose and connected they have been with each other. It's showing. They are playing great.

They are playing with some freedom. You know, they are having a great time. So it's good to see. You know, it's hard to put a lineup out, right. You have so many possibilities and you sort of have an idea of what they are going to do, and I'm sure they have an idea of what we are going to do, as well.

But I just feel so good about all 12 of my guys, really. They are just all playing very nicely, and you know, just doing all the right things. But the big part I think is just the fun we've been having this week as a unit and together. I think it's showed out on the course.

Q. In terms of keeping things going forward and keeping team momentum, how big was 2-2 this afternoon as opposed to maybe 1-3?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very big, 11-5 versus 10-6, that's a big difference in my book. When that session was going on this afternoon, I said to I think my wife, Nicki, and even the assistant captains at some point, I'm like, if we can just get a halve out of this session, it would be a good session.

It was good that Bryson and Scheffler turned that match at the end, and it was a hard-fought match, and they all have been. There hasn't really been too many blowouts from either side. It's been tightly contested, I feel like, and we have come out on the winning end a few more times than they have so far.

But yeah, it was an important session I think just to get the two points.

Q. Dustin Johnson, allowing for the fact that he is No. 2 in the world and he does have a very good record here, what factors informed you of the decision to put

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your oldest player out for five matches, basically your only guy?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, you said it, and the relationship that he has with Collin and the team that they have formed right from the start, actually ten days ago, two weeks ago I had them together. They just felt good with each other. They complement each other's game very nicely. Both heck of players, and they just enjoy being with each other. They both played great.

And we knew DJ's record going around here. He's had some great events here. Probably should have won one of the PGAs here, but he's enjoyed the course and played it well again this week.

Q. You stressed that you wanted your players to rest, and I found it interesting, you must have confidence in his physical abilities at 37 to handle this kind of a load?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and I kept my options open this afternoon. I wanted to see this morning who was playing well, and you know, when we saw those guys going out there and playing well again, DJ and Collin, I knew straightaway that they needed to go in the afternoon again.

They played great again.

Q. You were there obviously in 2012, and so was Davis. Can you talk about maybe what you and Davis have talked about what went wrong in 2012 from a captain standpoint, and what did you incorporate maybe into this?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, we did, we talked about it a lot. I think we learned a lot of lessons from 2012.

Probably the thing I can say is that we didn't do a good job putting our lineup out on Sunday. Not that we took it for granted by any stretch of the imagination, but we just could have done better with it.

And that was on our mind here today. We think about our past mistakes, and we are trying to learn from them and see what we can do to try and improve on them, and that was definitely one of the things that we were talking about up there tonight.

So you know, it's hard to say if you got it right or not. You know, I like where we're at, and you know, I like what my guys are doing.

Q. How much will you explain to the guys that weren't

there what happened at Medinah and how you have to be on edge going in or on top of it going into tomorrow?

STEVE STRICKER: To the guys on the team?

Q. Yeah.

STEVE STRICKER: No, I'm not going to bring up Medinah. I mean, I just told them before they left, I had a little small conversation with them. Again it's about getting them back and get some food in them and get some rest and get ready for tomorrow.

I just said that we've got another day. It's not over yet. Let's not rest on what we've done these first couple of days, and you know, don't be content with where we're at and let's go out there, we want to win the session again tomorrow.

These guys are still very focused. I think they have learned from our past mistakes, as well. They know. They have watched.

No one is taking this day tomorrow for granted at all, and we are totally focused on what we need to do to get the job done.

Q. Question for you, looking for some insight into your mental state. If the spectrum of possible thought right now is on one end, 11-5, we've done it, nobody's come back from that much, it's over, and on the other side it's I'm dreaming of all the different possible ways we can lose, where are you? Which one are you closer to? How does your brain work?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I don't know, my brain is tired, I know that. It's been a long couple years and a long month, really, this last month.

But I'm still super excited and super encouraged and fired up for my guys, and my focus is straightaway on tomorrow, and I'm not thinking about results yet. I'm thinking about, you know, just taking each shot, each match at a time, and try and enjoy the day again tomorrow. It's going to be a long day again tomorrow.

I'm really not trying to think about results yet.

Q. Medinah has been referenced, but curious, more generally, in your experience, you've been on the other end of some of these as a player and an assistant, how much has that framed your captaincy, like what you took from that to try to make sure those things didn't happen, or did they?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I've learned a lot. I've been a part of so many teams, captain of the Presidents Cup team, been multiple assistant captains. I don't know if anybody has had as much experience being a captain as I have, really, and just watching and trying to learn and trying to figure out what is the right things to do, how to deal with the players, how to formulate a team room, all that kind of stuff.

I've learned a ton. I think my first year as an assistant was in 2014, and I've been a part of every team since in some capacity.

I've learned a ton. I've learned what things have worked and what things haven't worked and just have thought about this a lot, really, over the last, you know -- especially the last couple years on trying to do everything right to give these guys a great experience and hopefully come out on top.

Q. No modern team since 1979 has reached 19 points. Has that been discussed in the room, setting a record?

STEVE STRICKER: No, I didn't know of that point total at all.

Q. What did you think of some of your players that were sitting out the second session, chugging beers on the first tee?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I didn't see it, I guess, until somebody told me about it. I was in trying to grab some lunch, but you know, to be quite frank with you, it looks like they are having a good time and enjoying the experience.

We get ridiculed for being too tight and all that, and then we do something like that where it looks like our team is together and having a good time and trying to get with the crowd.

I thought it was great. It's kind of a Milwaukee Bucks thing where, if I'm not mistaken, I've seen "Chug a Beer" on the JumboTron at the Milwaukee Bucks games, and it's something that's kind of a Wisconsin tradition, I guess, whether it's good or bad. It just looks like they are having a good time.

But I knew I was probably going to have to answer that question because they went to that first tee and they did that, and I'm fine with that. They had fun with it. Fans had fun with it, and it was just another good time that my guys are having.

Q. At the time, there was a little bit of ridicule when it

came to the whole idea of the task force and kind of moving in a different direction, but having been a part of this now since every -- since that time, has that paid off? Did that work in terms of -- regardless of tomorrow, you had the great 2016 and putting yourself in position here again?

STEVE STRICKER: I think it did work. Again, we are learning as we go along still.

And sometimes, to be honest, it's just the other team that plays well and you can't do anything about it. And there's times where the captain has done everything right. I've seen that, too, and the players, we just haven't gotten it done on the course. So far, so good here.

But yeah, I think we are learning all the time as we continue to play these, and we'll learn some more after this week, too, and keep trying to improve and trying to get better.

JOHN DEVER: Captain, thanks for your time. Sleep fast. Sunday singles awaits.

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